THE STORY OF THE COUNTRY DOCTOR.
THE COUNTRY DOCTOR. By HONORE DE BALZAC.
12mo. pp. 394. Boston: Roberts Enothers.
The many-sidedness of Balzac's genius is strikingly exhibited in "Le Medicin de Campagne." It
demonstrates also the injustice of much of the
criticism directed against this great writer by Sainte Benve and others who have followed his lines of interpretation. It is significant that this book was one of Balzac's favorites. It is significant because the work is characterized by none of the qualities which it has been customary to attribute to his fiction, and which do, in fact, appear in much of it. The "Country Doctor" is not a novel in the ordinary sense of the term. It is rather a prose poem, and one of the most beautiful, captivating and ennobling in any literature. Balzac himself said of it that it was a picture of " the Gospel in action," and the definition is keen and succinet. It is indeed a story of the noblest and most practical philanthropy, so enriched by philosophy, so broadened by prefound economic analysis, so full of deep suggestion and piereing criticism of social problems that it might constitute a statesman's text book, and convey useful ideas to the most experienced administrators. The parrative of Dr. Benassis, his simple yet telling description of the methods by which he created a flourishing district and a populous and perous town out of an arid waste and a stagnant and benighted hamlet, is unique both in man-ner and matter. The devotion of the country doctor to the community whose interests he had taken in charge is indeed touching and beautiful, but such instances are not whelly unfamiliar. What gives this story its charm and distinction is the art of the writer in developing before us, by the simplest and least obtrusive means, one of those really majestic characters whose lives men follow with never-failing interest, and whose biographies constitute the most fastuating literature, since they illustrate and stimulate the higher potentialities latent in every human breast. Dr. Benassis is not a common man, but a great one. He has in him the capabili-ties of the statesman, the deep perception, the broad view, the power of collocation and association which seem to belong only to minds of the highest executive capacity. He is a man who in other circumstances might have eclipsed a Colbert, a Richelieu or a Carnot; and he added to the brilliant administrative talents of a successful Minister qualifications for his work which few Ministers

To obtain the confidence of these superstitious, bigoted, opinionated peasants was a task to have bailed most men, but Benassis accomplished it. Nothing in his proceedings is more interesting than his constant utilization of the peasant greed to lead these sordid folks up to a higher plane of life. He does not indeed do evil that good may come. He merely shows those whom he would benefit that self-interest beckons them on in the paths he indicates. His policy throughout is perfectly sane and practical. He cherishes no sentimental illusions. He does not look for gratitude from those whom he assists, though in the end he is rewarded by it. He does not weaken the moral fibre of the poor by almsgiving. He charges them nothing for his ministrations as a physician, but in all else he so orders things that industry and perseverance are the indispensable conditions of success. When he has given an energetic young man the opportunity to found a brick-making business he looks on and allows the man to toll and struggle painfully for a year, and only comes forward to help him with money when he sees that the courage and applica-tion of the neophyte offer guarantees for the wise employment of the new capital. So it is with all the industries he introduces. He finds markets for the products of them and points out the best methods of securing the largest profit. But the men themselves are left to do the work and are thus taught to depend upon their own exertions and to acquire habits of diligent labor and sturdy thrift. Sometimes it is necessary for the doctor to begin a new undertaking himself, as in the making of the first public road. The people must in such a case learn projection therefore he constructs part of it at his own expense. But as soon as the peasants realize the importance of the work he leaves the completion of it to them, and thenceforth it is unnecessary for him to use persuasion in bringing them to see the value of other means of access to fresh markets. So perfectly sober and matter-of-fact are all the good doctor's plans and devices as to convey the impression that thus and not otherwise could the develcoment of the village and district have been brought about; and that the whole enterprise, however much out of the common run, is quite practicable, given a man of this supreme executive force and extraordinary tact and judgment.

It is in effect the founding of a miniature State THE EPOCH. and the participation of the curate and the judge in the work typily the co-operation of the church and the law with medicine in the moulding of society. The deeper thoughts of the author, as also those predilections which put him out of sympathy with the dominant spirit of the time, are shown forth in the remarkable conversation which takes place at the dinner-table of Dr. Benassis. Balzac distrusted the democratic movement, and the reaction of his mind against the Revolution naturally carried him far toward the other extreme. Nevertheless his defence of a strong government is too able not to be admired even by those who reject his conclusions. It must be admitted that some of his prognostications have been verified more closely than is agreeable, while others of his observations upon the re-sults of the popular system of government are so entirely applicable to the existing situation, not only in France but elsewhere, that they might have been written yesterday.

It is a conspicuous proof of the power of Balzac that discussions so foreign in their character to the chief uses of fiction, and so little attractive to the ordinary reader, are when presented by him in-vested with a positive interest which relieves them of all incongruity and dulness. One reason of this undoubtedly is the vivid realism of the writer. In his hands Dr. Benassis becomes an historical pe sounge, and we read of his doings and follow his savings with all the active interest which is awakened by perusal of the life of some celebrated philanthropist. So completely did this great artist infuse into his characters the strong vitality with which he himself was endowed that we forget their artificial origin and take his invention for biography. No doubt this result is aided by the versi militade of the surroundings. Nothing can be more real than the people among whom Dr. Benassie ial ors, than the scenery amid which he daily rides on his professional and benevolent missions. It has been said that Balzae had no feeling for nature. The absurdity of such a criticism must be apparent to it more strongly refuted than in "The Country Doctor." His descriptions are charming, sympa-thesic, delicate, exact. He brings into relief every beauty of the landscape. He lingers with loving fondness over the lovely solar and atmospheric effects produced by the changing hours upon the ouging mountain peaks, the forest growth, the the doctor, into all the subtle delights of life in the spen air. He putes the flowers which spring sponor high on the mountain sides. Not a rustling of ze or a murmur of the stream escapes him How linely true are the genre pictures he introduces here and there; how graphic are the sketches of his peasants; how complete is the study of the old Morean and his wife, yet drawn with what simple strokes! In this nook of the mountains he has placed types of agricultoral France. But his work does not end]here. Nowhere are there stronger or con told in a barn by an old veteran is item terpiece, and it is proper to add that Mise uncley has given an admirable translation of it. abedied in that story. (It was published sep-ately by the author, and had a great vogue at the ma.) What vigor, tereoness, military abruptness, The man who conceived it must have looked as deep into the hearts of Napoleon's veterans as he did into those of the men and wemen of the world whom he painted and analysed so exactly and so

place and even the humble and sordid occupy the cene so largely there is not a note of all this simple description which has not its own interest. The old peasant woman who takes in orphans from the commune and rears them at a pecuniary loss in despite of her poverty because she so loves children; the consumptive boy who is singing his life away; the patriarchial funeral scene at the mountain farm; the bright little sketch of the prosperous brick-makers; the pathetic episode of the Fossense, the poor girl whose nervous system overweighted her so hopelessly; the account of Butifer, the smuggler-hunter, charged with a temperament which will not let him lead a quiet humdram lifeeach and all are interesting and attractive, not only because of the art which informs them but because of the vivid realism which distinguishes them from the work of almost every other novelist.

There is a singular purity and loftiness about the book. The devotion of Dr. Benassis, the beauty of the region in which the scene is cast, the upward movement of the action, all combine to cast over the work a kind of tender beauty which no reader who is not unsympathetic can fail to perceive. Balzac's spiritual power is displayed at its best in these pages. Truly it is "the Gospel in action" that he shows us. Nor does he descend from the high plane upon which his design is conceived even in the most critical point, which is the confession of Benassis. This is the solution of the riddle, the explanation of the renunciation of the world by a man of such singular powers. The Benassis who deserted the girl who loved him may seem at first incompatible with the Benassis of later life, but Balzae made no mistake in his theory of development. The youth, Southern in temperament, warped by a stupidly repressive education, thrown on the world with abundant means and no saving experience, yielded naturally and perhaps inevitably to temptation. It was not want of heart but thoughtlessness that led him into the treason he committed ; and when, though tardily, he realized his misdeed, his character sas affected for life. The disappointment of his second love deepened and intensified the saddening and purifying influence, but it was the shock to his conscience caused by the death of his son's mother which put him in the path of expiation and redemption. The real nobility of his character is indicated by his victory over the suicidal yearnings which at first beset him, and the establishment in his mind of the convictions as to the line of his duty. His sin brought him suffering, but the suffering cleaneed and raised instead of souring and hardening him. His sympathies expanded as his own anguish deepened, and when life seemed no longer to hold any good for him, selfabnegation at once furnished him a new career, and in transforming his griefs into benefactious gave to the existence he had ceased to value an importance which even his humility could not ignore.

There is a subtle stroke of art in the manner of the good doctor's death. He was apoplectic of habit, and he had the symptoms of a rush of blood to the head on a certain evening when a letter bearing the Paris postmark was handed to him. He read it with increasing agitation and suddenly fell forward, exclaiming "I am dead!" Then he told his housekeeper to "burn that letter" and became msensible. Balzac does not intimate in any way the contents of the fatal letter. He does not in fact authorize the inference that the letter produced the fatal result. But it is shown that Benassis believed it to be from Evelina, and that the thought that she might be free at last flashed into his mind. Whether the news in it was good or bad is left unexplained. In either event Benassis dies, and it is clear that his death alone could have ended the book fitly. A lesser artist would perhaps have caused Evelina to relent, and have sought to lighten his concluding pages by the prospect of wedding festivities. But Balzac knew better. There was nothing for Dr. Benassis, as there was nothing for Lear, but death. And as Kent's apostrophe

"Olet him pass! He hates nim That would up on the rack of this rough world Stretch him out longer." forms the fittest dismissal of the great mad King, so in taking leave of the country doctor we feel that nothing can equal the elequence of the simple by actual experiment the value of the new means of inscription put on his tombstone by the people he had so loved and befriended. The continuation of his life would have been an anti-climax. It was completed when the end came,
It only remains to be said that Miss Wormeley

has translated the book excellently, and has preserved as nearly as possible every shade of the anthor's meaning. The enterprise of the publishers in undertaking to English Balzae is certainly commendable, but it could not have succeeded as it has but for the good fortune which sent them so capable and sympathetic a translator.

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VANCOUVER. Tascelay, Feb. 12, 11 30 a. m.
CITY OF CHESTER Sauday, Feb. 12, 30 9 p. m.
CITY OF ERRLIN Tuesday, Feb. 22, 400 p. m.
CITY OF RICHMOND. Tuesday, Feb. 22, 400 p. m.
CITY OF RICHMOND. Tuesday, Feb. 22, 400 p. m.
CITY OF RICHMOND. Tuesday, March 1, 9 30 a. m.
CABIN PASSAGE, 500 and upward. INTEICMEDIATE,
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NEW YORK, SOUTHAMPTON AND BREMEN.
EM3. Wed. Feb. 16, 12:30 pm. SAA & A. Select March 5, 1 p. m.
THAVE, Wed. Feb. 24, 6 a.m. ALLER, with March 5, 1 p. m.
FULDA, Sat. Feb. 26, 1 a.m. ALLER, with, Mar. 9, 5 a. m.
Furst Cabin, 875 to 456, according to location, second Cabin, 856 of the Sak Cabin, 857 of the Sak Cabin, 857 of the Sak Cabin, 858 of the DACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY'S

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Cabin, 870. Steerage, \$30.
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CITY OF RIO DE JANERIO suis Sat, March 5, 2p. m.
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Bicamanip Allianca, Wednesday, February 23, at 4 p. m.

From Newport News, Va., third day after at 7 p. m.

From Newport News, Va., third day after at 7 p. m.

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Legal Notices.

SUPREME COURT.
NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR APPRAISAL. DUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that it is the intention of the Coursel to the Corporation the city of New York to make application to the Suprement for the appointment of Commissioners of Appraisal, der chapter 490 of the Laws of 1883. Such application will made at a Special Term of said Court, to be held in the court Jadical Datrict, at the Court House in Pourthkeepsie, these Courty on the 20th day of February, 1887, at 11 lock, in the foreneon. The object of such application is to aim an order of Court appointing three dismeterated and special recholders, of whom two shall reside in the Courty West creeker, and one in the city and comment. and designated hereon as Parcels Nos. 712, 3, B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. and K. and Nos. 712-3, 719-3, 2019 and 718-3; and we direct this plan to be flied as "Final Plan Sneet No. 9.4." And we do further everify that said xx similar maps have been added by the state of the control of the co crossing the aforesaid centre line staright angle of interestant northeasterly from Monument No. 76 on said centre line; thence (3) south 2° 55′ 20′ cast 68*, feet; thence (4) south 2° 55′ 20′ seet; thence (5) south 87° 5′ west 283*, e feet; thence (6) north 62° 48′ west 184*, feet to the casterly line of the aforesaid survey; thence (7) along said easterly line south 27° 12′ west 2001*7;000 feet; thence (8) north 48° 21′ west (8)*, feet to the place of beginning; containing 48° 10′ acres, more or less. All of which lands are to be taken in fee simple. Dated New-York, January 15, 1887. E. HENRY LACOMBE, Counsel to the Cerporation.

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